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# **The World in Harmony Framed: A Musical Approach to Renaissance Poetics from the Works of Thomas Campion and His Contemporaries**

Senior Paper

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The medieval encyclopedist Isidore of Seville wrote: “Nothing exists without music; for the universe itself is said to have been framed by a kind of harmony of sounds, and the heaven itself revolves under the tones of that harmony” (Tillyard 101). When one begins to understand the strange and fantastic minds of the Elizabethan Renaissance, one idea persists notably through everything: harmony. Harmony orders the grandeur of cosmos by the sublime and heavenly song of the celestial spheres yet also dictates the minutiae of human expression in order and proportion. Nothing might be understood without this standard - it is as natural as it is aesthetic. Therefore, when attempting to understand the diverse and exceptional literature from this time, we must consider the harmony to which it attended and from which it gained purpose. What does harmony mean for the modern audience wishing to understand the strangely foreign yet familiar Elizabethan poet? This question poses a challenge for the modern perspective to empathize with the Elizabethans and their unique worldview, the process of which encourages us to move beyond incredulity of its esoteric complexity to wonder at the harmonious universe sadly gone silent. How best to then implore the silent voice to speak?

In the 16th century English as a language was only just realizing its full literary potential and as the Elizabethan period developed it marked an important transition from vernacular forms to high literature. A synthesis of literary ideas and mediums coalesced which resist easy interpretation and remind us in turn of the complex lives they represent. Nevertheless, an aesthetic standard which developed by the end of the era has persisted into our own, described by scholar John T. Irwin as the “establishment of metaphysical wit and the complex image as the major evidences of literary worth” (122). However, before John Donne and the metaphysical poets influenced this stylistic sedimentation, the aesthetic of poetry was less clearly defined. It was, for one, marked by an exuberance for experimentation with innovative as well as ancient

styles rather than simply highbrow competitions of wit. How is the modern audience intended to understand these widely varying forms and styles in an already distant literature? What if they actually belonged to a picture of the Elizabethan poet that is yet incomplete? Consider that out of many of the major structural elements of poetry such as syntax, meter, accent, consonance, rhyme, etc., none are clearly related to a strictly semantic interpretive method, while nearly all share some equivalence with music and furthermore aspects of language performance. This subordination of form is due to the fact that these elements are generally perceived as secondary to the more accessible and salient features of image and metaphor. However, these subservient elements, when properly understood, reveal themselves as a highly essential and neglected aspect of Elizabethan poetics, one which is derived primarily from the sound experience. This potential suggests that the poetic act might be more fully realized as a kind of linguistic sound painting beyond the conceit of words.

The complete identity of the Elizabethan poet is somewhere bound up in this complex mixture of theories and ideas, from the relatively accessible dimension of the purely literary to the more obscure Orphic bard inextricably tied to the mystical and divine act of music making. Thomas Campion (1567-1620) though equally composer as well as poet, nevertheless embodied the musical-poetic considerations common to all Elizabethan poets. His work furthermore represents an area of English musical history which was extremely relevant to the culture as a whole, specifically with his work in courtly entertainment including the masque and especially the ubiquitous lute song. His rare mastery of multiple disciplines provides a testament to the potential expression of poetry with music: his principal achievement being the impressive unification of their aesthetic capabilities rather than a strict distinction of them. Furthermore, Campion's large body of lyric poetry presents a unique challenge to criticism from any literary

perspective in that his poetry being written simultaneously as music deconstructs assumptions about the sanctity of the written text. Despite a multiplicity of potential critical approaches given his output, Campion's songs most strongly suggest the need for the development of unique hermeneutic strategies for analyzing Elizabethan verse in a way that clarifies the complex relationship between written language and its expression as sound. In doing so, analysis of Campion's work reveals rich alternatives to interpretation which expand the extent of analytic possibility: to recompose the harmonic framework and revive the unique Elizabethan perspective.

It is very difficult for a modern to consider music and poetry together without appealing to contemporary examples, yet these are perhaps more accurately described as a synthesis between foreign disciplines rather than a unified artistic expression. As Campion scholar Miles Kastendieck notes on their development, "Poetry had become imprisoned . . . It was no longer sung or spoken with the inflections and intonations of natural speech but declaimed as so much oratory; the musical qualities had been replaced by the literary aspects of poetry. Poet and composer were definitely estranged, and as the gap grew wider each art evolved a legislation and language of its own" (26). In many ways this could be seen as simply a microcosm of the modern ideology which immediately supplanted the Renaissance; in particular how the extreme isolation and refinement of disciplines implicitly mocks the notion that the archetypal "Renaissance Man" has left any respectable or imitable legacy. In fact, a review of the criticism on Campion alone would reveal that the debate on his legacy brusquely attempts to shoehorn his work into either literature or music with little sympathy for the possibility of an advanced interrelationship. If we were willing to consider that a historical lack of insight and inability to understand his work results in this academic contention rather than any direct defect in the lyric

itself, the ramifications would potentially open an unpleasant gap in our knowledge about Renaissance literature which cannot be easily explained. Kastendieck's advocacy for Campion is a partial suggestion that the primary limitations of contemporary criticism are based upon an entirely too self-reassured belief that it owns its historical context. For example, perhaps nothing would be more distressing to Renaissance literary scholars than a confirmation of Kastendieck's conclusions which state that "the predominance of music during the Elizabethan period, which is acknowledged as the time of England's greatest creative activity, had a material effect on the formation of the poetry. The reason for this influence was that in this age both music and poetry were vocal, that poets wrote lyrics to be sung and composers sought singable lyrics" (197).

In order to appropriately consider to what extent music and poetry were combined in thought and practice throughout Western history leading up to the Renaissance, it might be useful to consider the origins of the words themselves. The special significance of the etymological roots of music and poetry in antiquity is manifold. The word music comes from the Greek *mousikos*, itself based on the term *mousa*, or muse, meaning literally "pertaining to the muses." The word poetry, or poet, comes from the Greek *poetes* meaning roughly "maker or author," though like the later term bard, for centuries if not millennia, poetry had connotations of song (Etymology Dictionary). Combining the two terms, at least as an exercise, we begin to understand why the Orpheus myth carries so much cultural weight: he embodied the intersection of music, poetry, and divinity. Broader reaching issues of music and poetry in the ancient world cover a significant territory that is still relevant today, though they obviously bear special significance in relationship to the Renaissance. Western music theory has been traditionally dependent on the groundwork of the Greek mathematicians, especially the harmonic theories of Pythagoras, as the theoretical framework of the Western musical tradition. The Greek

philosophers were also among the first to speculate about music aesthetically rather than just mathematically - music was considered more than simply an auditory phenomena, it was a powerful universal force with serious ethical ramifications<sup>1</sup>. As is well known in classical studies, the performance of Greek poetry by the Homeric bards was done as a type of song, perhaps pointing to the initial practices in poetry which give it such a strong relationship to music. Giving special consideration to music-poetry<sup>2</sup>, it is notable that in Greek musical performance there was no notation for rhythm or meter, only pitch. Instead, they relied upon the quantities of the syllables in the lines to guide the delivery of the performance (Hollander 22). Independence of melody from verse was essentially inconceivable. The link between all these seemingly disconnected points is brought out with one idea: as early as the Western world began to wonder about music it had already been wed to language.

Before beginning to explore this musical-poetic relationship as it reappears in the Elizabethan Renaissance, it is important to delineate how perceptions about music during this time were different from our own. Renaissance scholar John Hollander argues that when we consider what music meant leading up to and during the Elizabethan period, we must delineate between *musica practica* and *musica speculativa* as part of a complex body of musical knowledge (Hollander 20). In the historical study of music as part of the quadrivium<sup>3</sup> we see that music occupied a fascinating academic niche that would perhaps garner incredulous reactions were it implemented today. As part of the core of the highest liberal arts studies music was

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<sup>1</sup> In Plato's *Republic*, he went so far as to consider banning certain musical scales which were considered to have an immoral effect. Previous to Plato, Pythagoras' followers formed a cult which worshipped the supposed divinity of his harmonic/geometric principles.

<sup>2</sup> This term refers to the antiquated aesthetic which unified both arts.

<sup>3</sup> The quadrivium was the order of the original liberal arts studies: arithmetic, astronomy, geometry, and music. These studies were preceded by the trivium, including grammar, rhetoric, and logic.

investigated both in terms of practical issues, such as music theory and its foundation in mathematics which form the study of *musica practica*, as well as in philosophical considerations about how music functioned abstractly in the world and life generally, the study of *musica speculativa*. The latter category, *musica speculativa*, is perhaps one of the most peculiar and foreign theories from musical antiquity, yet it should not be regarded as something merely idiomatic to musicians themselves (though this group was significantly large): the philosophy of music was part of an implied metaphysical understanding based on the aforementioned universal ideas of harmony and proportion. Following on these musical derivations, analyzing how music informed poetry will be most successful when guided by these historically suggested categories. Musical-poetic analysis for these purposes will therefore entail a dual function, both in terms of how the practical theoretical study of music can be found reflected in language, and also how music as body of theoretical ideas can be considered as an element symbolically, philosophically, even structurally underpinning the poetic act.

The peculiarity and distance of the Elizabethan world view also merits some brief explanation to elucidate the musical-poetic act in context of its philosophical signifiers. An erroneous and commonplace assumption about the Renaissance tends to see this movement as the beginning of the modern period reborn from the “dark ages” through the vitality of Classical aesthetic appropriation, yet a much too often neglected feature of Renaissance thinking was just how much ancient ideologies already permeated their consciousness due to the still dominant Medieval metaphysics. When we consider what ideological manifestations might be found in poetry from this time, the most important aspects of Renaissance perspective to consider are all linked through the harmonic theological superstructure: the notions of a linked chain of being, correspondences on the chain, universal order, and a cosmic dance.

The primary architecture, the great chain, is a metaphysical idea passed on from Plato and Aristotle to Medieval theologians which ultimately became so ingrained in Elizabethan thought that it was hardly ever even considered as a topic of literary worth (Tillyard 9). In this schema, the entirety of creation from God to inanimate objects is connected by degrees of similarity. For example, mankind is connected to God via the angels who are in turn connected to man via the faculties of reason and understanding, yet they also transcend man due to their higher knowledge and incorporeality (angels were made from a more refined air known as aether). Mankind's unique position at the crossroads of the substantive world and the spiritual was by no means lost on Renaissance thinkers: "So also the noblest entity in the category of bodies, the human body . . . touches the fringe of the next class above it, namely the human soul, which occupies the lowest rank in the spiritual order." (Tillyard 29). It is also important to note that besides the extensive schematizing minimally addressed here, Renaissance thinkers still generally accepted a Ptolemaic astronomy which modelled the universe geocentrically. Geocentrism made it obvious to the Elizabethans that the great chain of being was not simply a metaphor, it was the actual physical nature of the universe. This was to the effect of allowing Western culture to maintain a position of ontological significance relating to all of nature, i.e., they felt themselves to be cosmically paramount in a universe far from indifferent.

Proportion and harmony in the highest universal sense were conceived as a way of procedurally defining and preserving perceptions about the divine order, will, and rationale. Much of the way this was evidently communicated was through natural philosophy (physics, chemistry, astronomy, etc.), which revealed a cosmos consistent in structure and motion. The motion of the cosmos was further more said to be simultaneously either directed by the harmony of celestial spheres in motion. The harmonic "song" of the cosmos gave vitality to the structure



and is what is broadly meant by the idea of the cosmic dance (and is furthermore part of the theory of *musica speculativa*). The greater structure of the universe was furthermore found to be in correspondence with other seemingly “natural” constructions, such as political and social hierarchies, or the “body-politic” (Tillyard 88). These correspondences viewed on the chain could be both metaphorical and materially interrelated. Categories on different planes functioned in similar roles to those on other planes, for example, the sun as the brightest and most significant star is said to be both like God and even more so like the reigning monarch (consider the later *roi soleil* Louis XIV). On a more subtle level, correspondences develop complex and sophisticated ideas about the mirroring of interrelated orders. For example, man could be said to be a correspondent microcosm of all creation, beautifully described here by Sir Walter Raleigh:

“His blood, which disperseth itself by the branches of veins through all the body, may be resembled to those waters which are carried by brooks and rivers over all the earth, his breath to the air, his natural heat to the inclosed warmth which the earth hath itself . . . Our determinations to the light wandering and unstable clouds. . . our eyes to the light of the sun and the moon, and the beauty of our youth to the flowers of the spring.” (Tillyard 92)

Any attempts to explore cultural practices from this period, literary or otherwise, will be limited by what extent Elizabethan interdependence is taken to heart. Man was conceived, in essence, as the universal metonymy. There is nothing which may be perceived in nature, nor known by abstraction, which does not belong in like part to the greater expanse or rationale of creation. Each act of expression is therefore a lense which focalizes a shared conception of experience. Thus it may be that the poet is little different from the composer, the composer little different than the mathematician - each works with a substance of shared significations. What

sets poetry apart is the unique bond it sets up between art and science: it was as much concerned with harmony and proportion as creativity and expression.

Implications of these ideas allow us to return to one of the primary issues of this research: completing the portrait of the poet. What does the poetic metonymy mean in practice? Perhaps no one speculated as admirably about the matter as Sir Philip Sidney in his “Defense of Poesy” (1579). Consider this passage:

“Only the poet, disdain[ing] to be tied to any such subjection, lifted up with the vigour of his own invention, doth grow, in effect, into another nature, in making things either better than nature bringeth forth . . . . Nature never set forth the earth in so rich tapestry as divers poets have done . . . her world is brazen, the poets only deliver a golden.” (Sidney 7)

As Sidney explains, poetry was in part designed to Platonically imitate and reflect the high and impossibly distant standards of nature in divine perfection. Beyond this, however, is the implication that poetry shares another attribute with the divine: the special license to creatively manipulate its medium to all manner of affect, from the pure aesthetic to a larger didactic purpose. A passage from Sidney’s “Defense” would seem exceedingly esoteric were it not for this point: “Now therein of all sciences . . . is our poet the monarch. For he doth not only show the way, but giveth so sweet a prospect into the way as will entice any man to enter into it . . . he cometh to you with words set in delightful proportion, either accompanied with, or prepared for, the well-enchanted skill of music. . .,” the poet, furthermore, “doth draw the mind more effectually than any other art” (21, 23). The poet is like the historian, but without the constraint of an unattainable objectivity; like the philosopher, but not faltered by the logic of obscure and difficult ideas, “his reason is, because poesy dealeth with the universal consideration, and history [philosophy] with the particular.” (Sidney 17). Rather than simply describing the poet, these

passages are significantly useful in helping to shape the form of questions needed to be asked about these poets. From these points it should be clear that the many questions about Campion's output as a poet are overly occupied with defining his unique style in isolation; rather more interesting is finding how Campion's work functions within the larger context of Elizabethan literature as part of the "universal consideration" and the specialized role of the poet.

Though obviously challenging for the modern, it was not also clear to Elizabethans that a standard for a "universal consideration" relating to poetics would be simple to define. Despite numerous and varying opinions, poetic debates from the period may be all classified relating to interpretations about harmony and proportion in how they may be found in language. A defining attribute of the discussion of poetics relating to proportion during the Elizabethan period revolved around a debate between proponents of classical and modern metrics. The early critical prose works debating this issue include a significant treatise by Campion entitled "Observations in the Art of English Poesy" (1602) in which he defends classically influenced ideas on meter. One of Campion's main concerns in the essay is in balancing the vernacular characteristics of English with the perceived superiority of classical quantitative meters. Quantitative meter, as a formal aspect belonging to an entire gamut of classical poetics, is a way of organizing verse around syllabic duration. Duration, stress, phonetic complexity, consonance, assonance, etc., are all elements of analyzing syllables and organizing them poetically. The consideration for quantity as the basic metric component of verse as opposed to accents originates in the unique style of fluid phonic cadencing of classical languages - still found today in the Romance languages for comparison - which draws the ear towards the order and duration of vowel sounds rather than consonant stops as in English. English has not, however, completely abandoned quantitative forms, and during this period where classical language education was prevalent

attention to duration was a significant aspect of poetics. The arduous debate, which naturally peaked at the same time as the explosion of poetic formal experimentation, assists in understanding direct perceptions about English poetry from the authors themselves.

Campion's first claim in the essay reaffirms the relationship of poetry to sound by stating that "the eare is a rationall sense and a chiefe judge of proportion" (294). To a musical mind, it is obvious enough why a one-sided perspective on accentualism versus syllabism would be flawed: durational value is dependent on rhythmic integrity for the success of either - to separate them would be comparable to removing a physical dimension of reality. So why is it contemporary audiences are so comfortable dispossessing poetry of this fundamental characteristic? Approaching a poem syllabically is of course a bit unusual with the dominant form of poetic scansion being determined primarily by accents<sup>4</sup>; while Campion implicitly accepts this fact, he implores his audience to consider that accents are dictated by syllables which share a codependent relationship. In his treatise he states: "when we speake of a poeme written in number, we consider not only the distinct number of the sillables, but also their value, which is contained in the length or shortnes of their sound" (Campion 292). In fact, Campion suggests that it is in the nature of our speech and writing to dictate poetic syntax by the syllabic foundation first and foremost, while the accents are but a prominent secondary feature due to the unique spoken characteristics of English. It is in the pronunciation that makes syllables "unapt to slide" as Campion says, or to describe linguistically, the connection between vowels and consonants are uneven and distinct in English which causes the accentual orientation (Campion 296). Campion was not alone in this thinking either; one of his most significant theoretical predecessors, the poet George Gascoigne (1535-1577), speculated that the unusual stressed

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<sup>4</sup> This method is ironically an appropriation of Classical poetics (Attridge 5).

nature of English aligned with the “grave” and “long” syllables of latin (Attride 5). On a fundamental level the work of Campion and his classically minded contemporaries proposed linguistic connections between the salient features of accentualism and syllabic organization which display an orientation towards poetry as sound presentation.

A specific concern Campion brings out against accentual writing in his treatise reflects a more general issue in substandard English poetry: “oftentimes they[poets] place instead of an Iambick the foot Pyrrychius, consisting of two short sillables, curtailing their verse” (Campion 295). To demonstrate this, he composed this line: “Was it my desteny, or dismall chaunce?” To a modern reader scanning accentually, there is no issue encountering syllables of varied length, possibly no feeling at all of “curtailing” the verse. One reason this occurs is for a lack of clear relationship between stresses of varied duration when read silently. Campion’s line is iambic pentameter, and scans properly when approached this way, but when spoken there is an obvious disparity between the weight of the feet: “(Dis)mall chaunce” is given the same proportional value as “(dest)eny.” This kind of generally acceptable aural disfigurement is the foundation for his assertion that syllables be handled with as much care as any other poetic element. Campion rejects pure accentual focus due to this distortion which he also perceived as a weakening of the potential for English poetry to compete with the classics. In this way, the poetic issue is more broadly a cultural one which, as Campion sees it, is a means of elevating and preserving the glory of a nation’s heritage through literature. To place this more broadly in the harmonic context, the elevation of poetry to the heights of the Classical giants was a way of dually elevating the poet as the microcosmic embodiment of harmony as well as the larger “body-politic” to which one was responsible. The potential success of this endeavor was significantly tied not only to content, but to the very form of the poetry itself.

Because this form is tied into both music and poetry, especially for Campion, one might question the parameters for how these forms can interact. Instrumental music actually lends itself quite readily as a starting point for considering the technical relationship between music and language, though on the surface the two areas seem rather unconcerned with each other. Literature as language silently notated is generally defined by a variety of intellectual constructions such as plot, discourse, imagery, form, connotation, conceit, utility, etc. Instrumental music as a more abstract form of expression is conversely defined first by its aural structures, second by its constitutive elements such as metrics and harmony, and last by the kind of hermeneutics typically applied to literature, such as in asking “what does this sound mean?” As such, music meets literature where written language becomes a sound event delivered from its lifeless notation. In other words, the vocal expression of poetry is a way of bringing language closer to music. In Campion’s words:

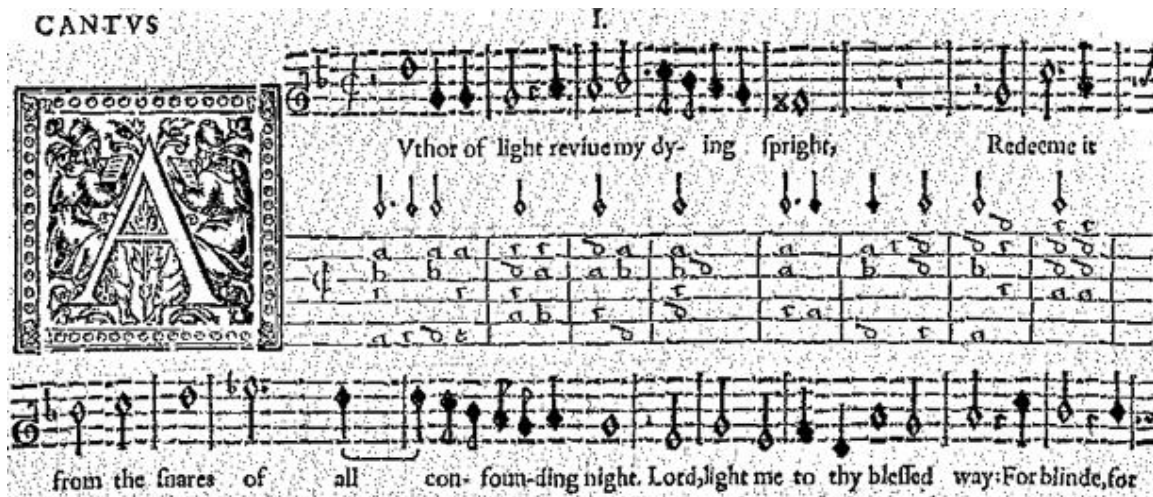
“The world is made by simmetry and proportion, and is in that respect compared to musick, and musick to poetry: for *Terence* saith, speaking of poets, ‘*who labor in the art of music*,’ confounding musick and poesy together. What musick can there be where there is no proportion observed?” (293)

To demonstrate the manifestations of the musical-poetic issue more explicitly, an excellent sample of Campion’s work is his song “Author of light.” This piece masterfully demonstrates the richness of his compositional technique and great finesse in handling meter. Naturally, the more striking aspects of this song are the musically conscious syllabic structures in a lyric of ostensibly rhymed iambic pentameter. The complex first two lines will help to demonstrate how Campion imported his understanding of proportion into his compositions:

“Author of light revive my dying spright<sup>5</sup>, / Redeeme it from the snares of all-confounding night” (Campion 59). In an accentual analysis as one might commonly undertake, the first line has immediate interest with a trochaic substitution for the initial iamb, also known as a choriamb. Reversing the initial foot draws extra emphasis to the word author, fitting as an appellation for God. The connotation of the word “author” also has obvious special relevance for a poetic work. The complete phrase stands out rhythmically because of the balance, or perhaps “bookending,” between accents and so forms a distinct unit further underscoring the weight of the phrase. Scanning the rest of the couplet shows regular accentual unity. The complete phrase, “author of light,” is also a direct reference to Genesis, and so compares the act of creation to the act of creating poetry: no humble equation. Perhaps here is where an average reader would stop the analysis and focus on other elements such as diction, but in order to parse out the exceptional qualities of this lyric it will be necessary to use a synthetic type of analysis which looks more closely at the direct musical poetic connections. Perhaps as testament to the internal unity of his compositions, it is easier to understand Campion’s quantitative ideas when doing a direct comparison between lyrics and music, and as will be shown, performing this kind of analysis greatly enriches the effect of the poem and adds to its overall complexity.

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<sup>5</sup> Spirit



(Score 1. “Author of Light,” facsimile. Campion, plate II)

Applying this synthetic analysis to “Author of light” reveals many further possibilities for meaning and interpretation, even when only looking at the first line. The first measure stresses the first syllable of author by giving it a whole note duration, emphasizing its religious significance, while the unstressed syllables “(auth)or of” are only given quarter notes. “Light” is also given the lengthier duration of the half note (ref. Score 1, measures 1-2). These words naturally suggest a lengthier musical duration as both the first syllable of “author” and the monosyllabic “light” involve complex motion of the mouth and tongue which physically draws out their length. This phonetic complexity combined with the poetic/musical construction exemplifies Campion’s careful crafting of phrases to support the spoken nature of the language as well as the weight of the word’s meanings. In most cases Campion’s compositional integrity was strong enough that it may be possible to scan the poem from the music alone. He gives some indication of this fastidiousness in his treatise:

“In joyning of words to harmony there is nothing more offensive to the eare then to place a long sillable with a short note, or a short sillable with a long note, though in the last the vowel often beares it out” (Campion 293).



The musical setting, while of course dictating specific rhythms, primarily guides the reader in how to interpret emphasis on syllables by physically forcing the performer to give a specific treatment to the words. In this way the music functions as an abstract modal representation of the lyric itself. For example, in singing the words “all-confounding,” the “all” is sustained through to the next measure, physically forcing the hyphenation, and “confounding” is given an uneasy vocal flourish drawing out both its complex syllables and its meaning (ref. Score 1, measures 11-12). Even for one unaccustomed to syllabic analysis, the music easily guides the ear to the proper rhythmic proportion of words.

Continuing in the music there are many more points of musical-poetic conjunction ripe for analysis. A rest follows the initial phrase, breaking the line up aurally to separate the godly from the human and emphasizing the pious supplication to “revive my dying spright.” The musical treatment of the second half of the line emphasizes the address to God by drawing out the plea for revival with a hopeful, longer, rising melodic line (ref. Score 1, measures 2-3). As the line comes to a close with the first recognition of mortality, “dying spright,” the musical line reverses and descends the scale with a quick yet plaintive and dramatic emphasis on the word dying (ref. Score 1, measure 4). The literal “fall” of the music is suggestive enough on its own. “Spright” concludes the line with another whole note, again giving emphasis to the spiritual, yet this time the note is the leading tone rather than the initial dominant<sup>6</sup>; a very evocative interval with a strong need for resolution which contrasts greatly against the stable dominant (ref. Score 1, measure 5). By avoiding the tonic emphasis given to God in the beginning of the line, Campion paints a musical distinction between the godly and the mortal: God belongs to the

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<sup>6</sup> The leading tone is the seventh scale degree and the dominant the fifth. Each represents a point of harmonic distance (both unity and distance for the dominant) and tension in relationship to the tonic, or primary scale degree. Nearly all listeners would recognize these harmonic relationships in performance without necessarily understanding the theoretical ideas.

perfect intervals, the tonic and dominant, and the human the imperfect and dissonant. Beyond functioning as another way of reading the poem, however, the music itself dramatizes and highlights the effect in a way that words alone cannot. For example, Campion proclaims the glory of the sun and moon and stars as but “mists and darkness” in comparison with God. At this point the music begins an even chromatic<sup>7</sup> ascent to the final cadence ending with “thee(God)” (Not shown). Chromaticism was somewhat unusual during this time, and its presence would have drawn special significance to the weight of this statement. Musical treatments, such as this chromaticism, can be seen as a way of hyperbolically extending the meaning of the lyrics - the author is demanding an interpretation that is guided by the sensual experience.

In order to prove the assertion about Elizabethan poetry which claims its fundamental nature as one which is fundamentally “harmonic,” it is necessary to somewhat paradoxically move beyond an approach which depends on a poem with direct musical accompaniment. At this point the issue becomes as tied into *musica speculativa* as it is *musica practica*, analyzed by abstract methods which consider what John Irwin called the “musical emblem.” In Irwin’s system, which he created as a means for analyzing only Campion, music must be considered as an ordering device functioning on different layers in the poem, most prominently through internal phonemic structuring, interwoven harmonic structures of phonemes between lines, and musical symbols (Irwin 123). While this approach is certainly most meaningfully applied to authors like Campion whose music-tinged artistry couldn’t unweave its basic components, in order to bring Campion into communication with the realm of the great Elizabethan poets of his time one must use techniques which analyze the music of poetry as a commonplace phenomenon. This will both affirm Campion’s reputation as an author of top tier poetry as well

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<sup>7</sup> Chromaticism contrasts tonality in that equal harmonic weight is given to all twelve pitches. Its use can be highly dramatic, as it is in this case.

as expand our conceptions of what would be considered valuable aspects of composing verse during this time. Considering the close relationship Campion's work had to that of Sir Philip Sidney's<sup>8</sup>, the latter's work makes a fitting choice.

From the famous "Astrophil and Stella" comes the well-known sonnet "With how sad steps, o Moone, thou climb'st the skies," a poem rich in phonetic harmonies and musical suggestions. The entire sonnet is reproduced as follows:

"With how sad steps, O Moone, thou climb'st the skies,

How silently, and with how wan a face,

What, may it be that even in heav'nly place

That busy archer his sharp arrowes tries?

Sure, if that long with *Love* acquainted eyes

Can judge of *Love*, thou feel'st a Lover's case;

I read it in thy looks, thy languish'd grace,

To me, that feel the like, thy state describes.

Then ev'n of fellowship, O Moone, tell me

Is constant *Love* deem'd there but want of wit?

Are beauties there as proud as here they be?

Do they above love to be lov'd, and yet

Those lovers scorn whom that *Love* doth possess?

Do they call *Vertue* there ungratefulnesse?" (Sidney 180)

Starting on the first tier of Irwin's system, internal phonemic links are many and complex. The initial line sets up a comparison between the linked internal rhyme between "how"

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<sup>8</sup> Campion's first published works were a set of songs appended to a publication of "Astrophil and Stella."

and “thou” which is used to order the structure of the personification of the moon. This link is initially reinforced by the phonetic consonant sounds between repetitions of the the six consonants ending and beginning with “how Sad StepS” and “climb’S the SkieS:” each term shares a precise balance of syllables and consonant sounds. The different iterations of these emotional declamations are marked by a gradual increasing complexity of syllables in the words, from “sad” to “silently” to “Languished,” developing a reflection of the complexity of this state of mind, one which Sidney “reads” in the moon and we the reader develop in performance. Consonant sounds also develop a narrative and we see this demonstrated in the first two lines with words linked by the /ow/ sound (how, thou): “sad” shares a consonant /a/ sound with “wanne” on the next line, while the intermediary terms “climbs’t” and “silently” are linked by the same /i/ sound. In this brief sequence we see a conscious pairing of emotional and active states developed through the second tier of Irwin’s system as part of a harmonically conceived structure.. The “active” state of the poem is also present by musical rhythmic patterns which also reinforce the meaning of many phrases: consider that the first line is comprised entirely of spondees, perhaps intending to evoke the feeling of the even tread upwards of the moon. Nevertheless, by the time we have reached “languish’d,” the moon and author are both consumed by the lovers state of mind and action falls to the wayside.

The connection of the poetic body to a heavenly body is far from insignificant. Consider how this is revealed through the presence of the last of Irwin’s designations, the musical symbol, in the third line with the phrase “heav’nly” contrasted against the phonetically similar “how wanne.” These and other references to celestial rancor raise conflict and discord in what is otherwise a state of cosmic balance and harmony. The lover significantly takes his case to the moon who is presumed to share the disharmony of the overly excited passions. With his careful

structuring, Sidney has raised the lover's plight from an ephemeral human struggle to a planetary one, a notion which reinforces the structural harmonic micro/macro correspondence. This musical emblem is not clearly related to music as *musica practica*, but is made available in a criticism which is aware of the presence of the signifiers of *musica speculativa*, in this case, the greater universal harmony. This characterization is possible because of a consistent aural structure which combines Irwin's first and second levels. Without availing oneself to the consideration of the finessed aural structure, traditional analyses could only approach this level of structural-semantic complexity with a relatively straightforward, though significantly developed, analysis of the iterations of the word love in its variety of forms and meanings. A traditional analysis would recognize the privilege of the repeated word and lovers plight, but would fail to appreciate the signification as part of an aurally structured relationship which evokes an image of the lover as a harmonic discontent, and therefore loses the essentially Elizabethan quality of the poem.

From this analysis it should be clear that the rewards of thinking musically in these settings can be a rich and rewarding mapping of meaning onto sounds which clarifies their complex relationships. Without any attention to the larger structure of the contiguous syntax to diction, i.e. semantic analysis, we are able to deduce some of the main interpretive ideas and characterize the general tone and style of the poem. Each category of Irwin's critique, though he custom-tailored it for Campion, is actually applicable to other poets without any direct links to *musica practica* in that there need not be a musical score to reference like there is for Campion. Music as an idea is broad enough to found in a multiplicity of structures. The result of this research is therefore not so much proving how valid this analysis is as much as it is demonstrating how far can it go in taking us to a higher ability to understand poetry, and by

extension literature and language generally. However, simply augmenting an already imperfect semantic approach cannot be seen as the proper direction to take with this research. Scholar Joseph Tate warns us about a possible stultifying effect of this adherence to the “complete” hermeneutic model with a striking inquest to critics at the conclusion of his essay on early modern meter:

“What might this and more such research on prosody tell us? . . . what begins to crystallize is the fundamentally and resolutely somatic awareness the period's writers brought to meter. Nonetheless, such a question misses the point: the fact of their awareness is not at stake, but an understanding of *how* they were aware of prosodical structures, culturally and physically, has the potential to reshape our methods, culturally and physically, of approaching early modern verse” (Tate 31).

Given the large license of the Elizabethan poetic endeavor to transcend all disciplinary boundaries, it should come as no surprise that a meaningful approach should be directed towards expanding interpretive possibilities rather than limiting them, despite the pleasure accompanied by the feeling of having “solved” a text. For example, this research suggests that harmonic structuring could be perceived as transcending the singular poem itself; in the case of “Astrophil and Stella,” one might wonder what greater structures might be found in a comparative musical study of the entire sequence. Could we not trace more than Sidney’s meaning by actual style, form, and development through the use of coded musical language? Could we not also characterize the literary being as expressed through the unique Elizabethan aesthetic? If we are furthermore describing a mode of literary being through poetry, could we not then trace the way Elizabethans continue to live through their literature in the codes and patterns of their prosody?

Research that insists that we consider Elizabethan society as complexly holistic implicitly suggests that we must also consider the literature as part and parcel of their perspective. In a fundamental way, this research has been an attempt to develop the phenomenological history about how language can be used as an expression of being through the looking glass of a unique ideology. In this case, being through ideology is a type of harmonizing relationship and therefore ultimately musical. The major exposition of prosody as a dominant aspect of the Elizabethan harmonic literary effect means that the preservation of interest in early modern verse is not simply a canonical issue, it is a historical one which reveals the pervasiveness of prosodic thinking in Elizabethan authors in a poetic exposition of what it was like to experience through language physically. The entire purpose of Tate's work in his essay, aptly titled "Numme Feete," is to show that writing poetry was a type of somatic exposition, carefully choreographed acting if you will, which when poorly performed was often described in metaphor as a physical handicap (Tate 1). Consider that if certain aspects of prosody function as signifiers of ontological meaning in their own right, what greater scope of inquisition might be made upon an entire dimension of literature that speaks to a criticism which has only read with its eyes. If being for the Elizabethans was part of a universal harmonic texture, than all of their literature may be read as a development of the discourse on that harmony. The challenge we face today in understanding this poetry is a conflict we face in any sort of interdisciplinary research: how do we overcome hyper-refined specialized knowledge bases to give weight to foreign though equally important and possibly congruent ones? The beauty and struggle through this work is in finding the appropriate treatment of disciplines in order for them to interact with each other. The demand is appropriately Renaissance in nature: each discipline should be treated as a locus which organizes universal ideas toward a directive(s) rather than a domain of knowledge

which sequesters it, our task is to find an intermediary which allows them to communicate with each other.

If we accept that meaning in poetry is not implicitly an exclusive domain, then we reveal the deficiencies in some dominant twentieth century modes of criticism, such as structuralist criticism, which make an attempt at a holistic philosophy, as the total effect of language in literature (and so total intention) cannot be completely explained by signifier/signification relationships, or really any process which aims at decoding. Giving due respect to an historically informed account for Elizabethan culture, we find that the strength and value of their literary output lies precisely in the development of a complex and indeterminate framework from which to understand it. The lurking spectre in the background of this discourse is the frustratingly vague notion that a more scientific and objectively structured criticism actually works against what becomes more and more clearly an aesthetic/philosophical misunderstanding. Unfortunately these conclusions raise the vexing problem with the previous poetic analyses with their potentially becoming trapped and appropriated into the same critical cycles they mean to overturn. The goal of this work, which has unavoidably been a greater understanding of this poetry, is structured by an implied directive that is still hermeneutic in nature, only now broadened by a more properly conceived Elizabethan ideology. The goal must not necessarily be to only speak more accurately about Elizabethan poetry, but to also hear it spoken with the fullness of its richly intended harmonic effect. The result of this research suggests that perhaps less, rather than more, objectivity and scientific perspective will assist us in some ways of gaining access to pre-modern ideologies which we often forget did not share these values. Modern criticism therefore unwittingly commits an unspoken act of violence by dismembering the poetic body in order to understand it. Unheard and unsung lines of music and poetry share



their quiet infamy with the forgettable persistence of the grave, and our piecemeal interpretation of Elizabethan poetry perhaps greatly affects its relatability for modern audiences with a powerlessness to bring the written words to life. The conclusion is simple: songs must be sung, and poetry must be heard. Though the performance is ephemeral, it is the difference between being, or not.

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